

DRAFT

To: Kay Charron
From: The Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators and The Vermont
Department of Education, Educator Quality Team
Date: June 2009
Re: Recommendations to the Transformation Policy Commission

Introduction:

You approached the Vermont Department of Education's Educator Quality Team (EQT) and the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE) seeking recommendations of policy changes to support improvements in educator quality that are necessitated by the Transformation. In developing the recommendations outlined below, the EQT and VSBPE consulted with the Department's Professional Development Think Tank, which is comprised of individuals from across the Department who are involved in providing, guiding, or regulating professional development, and with Professional Development Coordinator and Secondary Transformation Consultant, Carol Duley. These recommendations flow from this collaborative process.

In their 2008 report, *Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring U.S. Students Receive a World-Class Education*, the National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and Achieve, Inc. recommend that to improve learning of American students we must, "Revise state policies for recruiting, preparing, developing, and supporting teachers and school leaders to reflect the human capital practices of top-performing nations and states around the world."

Specifically in Vermont, the Transformation documents produced in the last two years have all acknowledged that our existing education system has a solid foundation upon which to build as we prepare our students for the future. Our state's accomplishments are thanks in large part to the strength of its professional educators. Clearly, teachers and administrators have played and will continue to play a key role in the transformation of Vermont's education system to meet the demands of the 21st century. State policies that support and strengthen the recruitment, preparation, and ongoing learning of our educators will be essential to the success of transforming Vermont schools.

Goal: Develop a statewide system for teacher and administrator development and systems change that supports all students success in college, careers, and 21st century citizenship.

The Transformation of Education in Vermont provides a clear picture of the kinds of knowledge and skills our students will need to succeed in this new century, along with the kinds of restructured learning environments that will lead to these outcomes. It is well-known that quality teachers have the single greatest impact on student achievement. It is also well known that a quality school leader is essential to an effective teaching and learning environment for both students and teachers. What our teachers and administrators know and are able to do will be key in whether we are able to accomplish the outcomes for our students that are envisioned by the Transformation process. To that end, the following strategies to improve teacher and administrator quality are required.

1. Establish, or revise, to reflect current research in teaching and learning and adult development, educator standards that set high expectations, and clearly state the criteria for success. *Vermont currently has a variety of separate standards for teachers, administrators, educator preparation programs, new teacher mentoring, professional development, and relicensure. These must be reviewed to ensure that they are research-based, aligned, and coherent.*
2. Use these standards as the basis for creating a continuum of policies that support educator (i.e., teachers and administrators) learning and growth from initial preparation through induction and mentoring, supervision and evaluation processes, professional development, relicensure and leadership roles.
3. In collaboration with stakeholders, develop and implement a comprehensive state-wide professional development plan based upon these standards to support educators' movement across the continuum and to hold them accountable for their performance and growth as educators. The plan would define how all Departmental professional development will be conducted and provide guidance to LEAs, schools, and educators as they plan for professional development. As part of this statewide professional development planning process, the state will adopt a limited number of professional development priorities to be pursued over several years and evaluated rigorously for impact. *Currently the state provides and/or supports a wide-variety of professional development activities for schools, districts, LEAs, etc. While there are benefits to offering this variety, such a system dissipates our impact and is not conducive to meeting specific goals. In addition, there is currently no systematic process in place for evaluating the effectiveness of the professional development provided by the state. A state-wide plan would allow the state to focus and thus strengthen its impact given its limited resources and capacity. (This recommendation should in no way be interpreted as limiting the rights of local districts or supervisory unions to set their own professional development priorities that are provided with their own resources.) A state-wide plan would also incorporate a system for evaluating the impact of all professional development provided by the state.*

What policy levers do the VSBPE and the Department currently control when it comes to teacher and administrator preparation and professional development?

Licensure standards including:

- Endorsement requirements that outline what a teacher or administrator needs to know and be able to do in each teaching/administrative area
- The General Competencies for School District Administrators, which *are based on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLIC) standards and are currently being revised*
- Five Standards and Sixteen Principles for Vermont Educators, which *are based on the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards and are currently being revised.*

Educator Preparation standards and requirements including:

- Level I Licensure Portfolio. *The portfolio, which is required for all candidates seeking their initial educator licensure, is based on the current 16 Principles and the portfolio requirements for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.*
- Results Oriented Program Approval (ROPA) requirements. *The state's review process for approval of educator preparation programs.*
- Testing requirements. *The VSBPE determines and monitors testing requirements for educators.*
- NASDTEC agreement. *This agreement governs the reciprocity of licensure between Vermont and the other 50 states. Each state can also set additional requirements for educators seeking licensure who were prepared in another state.*

Relicensure requirements. *Regulations adopted by the VSBPE define the credits/hours of professional development required, additional requirements such as the Individual Professional Development Plan and portfolio, and define what the focus of these credits/hours and documents must be.*

Professional development provided by the Department of Education – the content, format and funding of this professional development is at the Department's discretion.

Professional development funds disbursed to LEAs and other partners by the Department. *For example, the Department grants almost 13 million in Title IIA professional development funds per year to the LEAs. The DOE sets the conditions for those disbursements in accordance with federal requirements.*

State Board regulations 2120.4 and 2120.5 of the School Quality Standards. *These outline very general requirements for school-based professional development and staff evaluation. (Professional development, supervision and evaluation systems, and mentoring/induction programs are primarily the purview of LEAs and schools and are developed and/or adopted separately by each supervisory union or school.)*

Professional development standards adopted by the VSBPE. *(Currently, these are voluntary and advisory only.)*

Mentoring Guidelines established by the VSBPE. *(Currently, these are voluntary and advisory only.)*

Conclusion:

The VSBPE and the EQT recommend that the Policy Commission endorse pursuit of the following by the VSBPE and the Department:

1. Development of a coherent and aligned set of professional standards to guide the continuum of educator development from recruitment and preparation through induction and mentoring and ongoing professional development and leadership roles.
2. Alignment of all state policies above with these standards.

3. Development, in consultation with appropriate stakeholders, of a comprehensive state-wide professional development plan to focus the professional development provided by the Department, to ensure that all Department-provided professional development is conducted according to the research on best practices in professional development and adult learning, and to guide educators, schools, and LEAs as they develop their plans for professional development.